



November 10, 2005

Dear Community Friends

### Mail Theft

Every now and then we get reports of mail theft. Several people have recently reported that checks they put in their mailbox for outgoing mail were stolen. The thieves somehow "washed" the check – removing the name of the intended payee and then putting their own name on the check instead. The victims did not discover the crime until they got the canceled checks with their bank statements, or the payee called the victims asking why their payment was late (provided the payee didn't terminate a service first), or the victim's account suddenly became overdrawn because of the amount for which the stolen checks were written.

So, what can you do? Here is some advice from the US Postal Inspector Service on what you can do to protect yourself from mail theft:

- Never send cash or coins in the mail. Use checks or money orders.
- Promptly remove mail from your mailbox after delivery, especially if you're expecting checks, credit cards, or other negotiable items. **Don't leave it in your mailbox overnight** If you won't be home when the items are expected, ask a trusted friend or neighbor to pick up your mail.
- Always deposit your mail in a mail slot at your local post office, or at a metal Postal Service mailbox, or hand it to your letter carrier. **Don't leave outgoing mail unattended in your mailbox for pick up.**
- Ask your bank for "secure" checks that can't be altered.
- Have your local post office hold your mail while you're on vacation, or absent from your home for a long period of time.
- If you don't receive a check or other valuable mail you're expecting, contact the issuing agency immediately.

- If you change your address, immediately notify your post office and anyone with whom you do business via the mail.

- Consider starting a neighborhood watch program. By exchanging work and vacation schedules with trusted friends and neighbors, you can watch each other's mailboxes (as well as homes). If you observe a mail thief at work, call the local police immediately, and then your nearest Postal Inspector. The Postal Inspection Service office that serves Seattle can be contacted at:

#### **Postal Inspection Service**

**PO Box 400 Seattle, WA 98111-4000**

**Ph: 206-442-6300 Fx : 206-442-6304**

- If you believe your mail was stolen, report it immediately to your local postmaster or nearest Postal Inspector. You'll be asked to file a formal complaint. By analyzing information collected, Postal Inspectors may determine whether your problem is isolated or part of a larger mail theft problem in your neighborhood--and it may help Inspectors locate and apprehend the thieves.
- Consult with your local postmaster for the most up-to-date regulations on mailboxes, including the availability of locked centralized or curbside mailboxes.

### Update

In previous newsletters, we told you of a woman going by the name of Kim or Pam who used sympathy scams to work her way into the homes of our elderly and con them out of money or steal from them outright. She had been active for quite some time. We are proud to announce that not only was she arrested several weeks ago, this past Friday she was sentenced to 116 months in jail.

### **Take Care and Stay Safe!**

Mark Solomon, SPD South Precinct Crime Prevention